



# NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

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Contact:  
Lynn Duerod, 313-226-4680  
313-300-0662 cell  
Lynn.Duerod@us.army.mil

## Soo Locks 2010 shipping season will open early this year

**DETROIT** — On March 21, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will open the Poe Lock, part of the Soo Locks, in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., at 7:00 a.m. This event signals the beginning of the commercial shipping season, allowing Great Lakes freighters to pass around the falls in the St. Marys River 24 hours a day, seven days a week until next January 15.

The locks are opening early after the Corps received several requests from the shipping community and their customers to open early due to “an improved business climate” and to replenish critically low iron ore and coal inventories. After careful consideration and coordination with agencies involved with determining the winter commercial shipping operations the Corps made the decision to open on March 21 instead of March 25.

“Our work force is ready to accommodate this request this year, helping the maritime industry serve their customers with significant quantities of raw materials to fill vital needs,” said Lt. Col. James Davis, district commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District.

Current ice conditions show there is light ice downstream of the locks and moderate ice conditions from the West approach to the locks up to White Fish Point.

The Soo Locks are the only gateway for ships to navigate safely from Lake Superior through the St. Marys River, down to the lower Great Lakes for ships up to 1,000 feet long and 105 feet wide. Traditionally, more than 4,000 vessels, carrying up to 80 million tons of cargo, maneuver through these locks every year. Most cargo vessels transport iron ore, coal, grain or stone, some of them transporting more than 72,000 tons of cargo in a single load.

According to Kevin Sprague, winter repair coordinator, “General maintenance and repairs were completed during the ‘winter work’ maintenance season as our professional crews have pulled together and worked hard work under sometimes harsh weather conditions to complete all key projects. Some of the last few projects left will be expedited during the next few weeks to make sure the locks are ready to open.”

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**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS – DETROIT DISTRICT**

477 Michigan Avenue  
Detroit, MI 48226  
[www.lre.usace.army.mil](http://www.lre.usace.army.mil)